GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ATOMIC ENERGY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2338
ANSWERED ON:17.12.2003
LEAKAGE IN KALPAKKAM PLANT
BHASKAR RAO PATIL;SHYAMA SINGH

Will the Minister of ATOMIC ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Nuclear Scientists at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) have admitted that the leakage in the main reprocessing plant at Kalpakkam is the worst ever radiation incident in the history of the Indian Atomic Energy Department as reported in the Statesman dated August 7, 2003;

(b) if so, whether the leakage has since been controlled;

(c) if so, the details of compensation paid to the victims of this incident; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government to check recurrence of such incidents?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STATISTIC PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY, MINISTER OF ST THE DEPARTMENT OF SPACE AND MOS IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (ADDITIONAL CHARGE) S.B. MOOKHERJEE:

(a) No, Sir. There has been no leakage to environment. The incident at the Kalpakkam Reprocessing Plant (KARP) on January 21, 2003 was related to inadvertyent over-exposure of six persons.

(b) On January 21, 2003, when the Reprocessing Plant was under normal operation, there was an incident of inadvertentover-exposure to radiation of six persons during the process of transfer of low level liquid waste from a tank in an area, away from the main Reprocessing Plant. The cause of the incident, as identified later on by a specially ConstitutedTechnical Committee, was a minor leak in an isolation valve separating a high level liquid waste tank from the low level liquid waste tank resulting in increase in activity level in the latter. The safety authorities have investigated the incident according to the procedure, which involves measurement of radiation doses received, establishing the root cause and medical examination of the exposed personnel. The Medical Authorities have certified that all these six personnel are in good health and there were no abnormal findings. There was neither any release of radioactivity to the environment nor any risk of exposure to any member of the public.

(c) Since the personnel involved are physically fit and are in good health with no adverse symptoms, the question of compensation does not arise. However, as per the prevailinh Safety Guidelines followed at Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), these persons have been assigned jobs in the non-radioactive areas.

(d) BARC has well laid out mechanisms to review the safety status of Operating Plants. As per prevailing practice,the facility was immediately shutdown and an independent Technical Committee was set up to investigate the abnormal incident, so that remedial measures could be taken to prevent such recurrence and to disseminate the lessons learnt, to other similar facilities.